

1994

The marginalisation of women: Factors affecting the discontinuance of the careers of female police officers

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**THE MARGINALISATION OF WOMEN: FACTORS AFFECTING
THE DISCONTINUANCE OF THE CAREERS OF FEMALE POLICE
OFFICERS**

**BY
VICKI WILKINSON**

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

**Bachelor of Arts (Honours) (Justice Studies)
at the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences, Edith Cowan University**

November 1994

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ABSTRACT

Women have participated in policing in Western Australia for seventy five years. The first two women were employed as "Police Matrons" in roles which were restricted to what were thought to be the "feminine" tasks of dealing with female offenders, families and wayward youth, and providing clerical support to male officers. By 1941 there was a total of 8 women police in Western Australia and by 1960 their numbers had grown to twelve, however their role had changed little since 1917 and they were still seen as having limited function.

By 1975 pressure had grown, not only within the police force but external to the police organisation itself, from a greater social awareness regarding inappropriate deployment of workers on the basis of sex, colour, religion or ethnicity. The Women's Police Unit was subsequently disbanded and women were integrated into mainstream policing. The 1980s witnessed legislative changes regarding selection criteria used for the recruitment of new employees. No longer was it appropriate to set quotas for the number of women required, nor was it appropriate to dictate the stature and build of applicants. It was envisaged that this legislative change would enable the flood gates to open for women to enter policing. However, after nearly twenty years of Equal Employment Opportunity, this appears not to be the case.

Today there are 404 women police officers out of a total of 4,228 members of the Western Australia Police Force. Of these 404 women, 13 are Sergeants compared with 960 males at that rank. This leaves 386 women operating at the most junior level of the organisation. The low number of women at Sergeant level and the fact that there are none in the Commissioned ranks, may be attributed to their relatively recent influx into the organisation.

However, there still remains sufficient cause for concern when it is realised that the force is not retaining these women at a rate much greater than their attrition.

This study aims to determine the factors which contribute to the discontinuance of the police careers of female officers. An eclectic feminist perspective is offered as the basic framework of analysis for the study. Specific reference is made to that element of feminist theory relating to the marginalisation of women. The technique of gathering data is also set within a feminist research paradigm involving fifteen resignees from the Western Australia Police Force, in a process of discussion and interview on the factors which affected their decision to discontinue their chosen career.

The study shows that these women experienced marginalisation within their working lives as police officers, which was a significant contributing factor to the discontinuance of their police careers. What was also identified was the overriding inflexibility of the police organisation to accommodate the specific and changing needs of women as individuals within that organisation.

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature.....

Date..... 9th December 1994

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank many people associated with the production of this thesis.

First and foremost, thanks go to my husband Bryan, his constant love, support, encouragement and above all tolerance has enabled me to fulfil many dreams, this is but one.

Thanks also go to my supervisor Charles Edwards for his constant reading and re-reading of what has become my sole focus for 1994. I thank you Charles for your endless patience, supportive words and gentle way.

Special thanks go to my mentor and friend, Irene Froyland, without her encouragement, support and push I would never have had the opportunities that I have enjoyed this year.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my parents Ann and Ross Smith, their pride in me shows: a child could ask for nothing more.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is primarily concerned with women who have left the Western Australia Police Force, their reasons for leaving and their reasons for not returning to policing as a career. It contains:

- a critical analysis on the place of women in traditionally male-dominated professions,
- a review of the specific literature concerning women in policing,
- a description of the theoretical framework of this study, and
- a presentation of the results of this study and a discussion thereof.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Historically, policing in this and other countries has been an occupation dominated by men. The implied or stated requirements that police be tall, strong, confident and fit, combined with the associated occupational culture, fundamentally has excluded women (Brown and Campbell, 1991; Martin, 1979; Martin, 1980; Potts, 1983).

Like many other male dominated professions, it is a characteristic of modern policing that increasing numbers of women are applying for, and to some extent gaining entry to, a career in law enforcement. This phenomenon has been seen to emerge throughout the world over the last twenty years, with particular emphasis on women being integrated from Women's Police Units to mainstream policing. However, even now in Western Australia there is still a significantly low proportion of women within the ranks of the police. Of even greater concern is the paucity of women in middle management and none in the commissioned ranks. This being the case, it is important to retain those females who have gained entry, received training and possess a wealth of police and life experience.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study examines the contexts of policewomen's resignations and decisions not to return to policing, and highlights the existence of a resource of women within the community with police experience who could, or may wish to, return to a career in policing, but for various reasons are unable or choose not to do so.

Identification of factors which may enhance the opportunity of these women to remain in policing or re-engage their chosen career has implications for two groups. This report will have an impact for those women who have left the force, and, secondly, for those women who are still serving officers and considering resignation.

This study is also significant to the police organisation itself. It identifies a loss to the organisation of trained and experienced personnel. Such a loss is not only costly in terms of training, but also replacement and turnover expenditure. Contributing factors to resignation are, in part, indicative of failure on the organisation's part to accommodate the needs of women and other groups. Therefore it is vital to the organisation and its members that there be an identification of factors affecting the attrition of women. This study therefore may enable the police organisation to utilise its human resources in a far more efficient and effective manner, within a just and equitable context.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The most significant factors affecting women's participation and progress in policing are policing's history, culture, recruiting practices, work conditions, leave provisions, child care, EEO policies and sexual harassment and promotional barriers (Brown & Campbell, 1991; Martin, 1979; Poole and Pogrebin, 1988; Potts, 1983). The purpose of this study is to examine policewomen's careers and to identify those factors which contribute to their resigning and not returning at a later stage

A number of women who have served in the Western Australia Police Force were asked their perceptions of policing as a career, with particular emphasis on why they left, and why they have not rejoined. This study seeks to answer two questions.

1. Have women, who are no longer employed with the Western Australia Police Force, experienced marginalisation during their police careers?
2. What were the factors contributing to the resignation and non-return of these women to their police careers?

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FEMINIST THEORY AND THE MARGINALISATION OF WOMEN

2.1 ECLECTIC FEMINIST PRINCIPLES

Feminist theory comprises a comprehensive body of work which includes, among other issues: the gendered nature of language; sexuality; popular culture; psychology; literature and the arts; economics; health; the state; the family; education and the labour market (Hughes, 1994). Feminism offers not only a set of strategies through which to improve women's material lives, but a critique and analysis of the very foundations of a society which uses gender inequality to organise itself (Crowley and Himmelweit, 1992). The theoretical underpinnings of this thesis are grounded within an eclectic feminist paradigm. That is to say, no one specific feminist ideology has been adopted to provide an analysis of this study, but rather, elements from a multiplicity of plausible feminist theories are combined to provide an explanation, acknowledging the many and varied values of each of the feminist perspectives.

Arguably, feminist paradigms of marginalisation can trace their heritage to Marxist roots. From Marx's theory that economic and political power are wielded by one class arises the feminist argument that such power is wielded by the male sex. As Tong (1989: p. 58) claims, "Marxist feminists, in recent years, have refocussed the attention from labour operations within households to the inequitable manner in which this same sexual division of labour operates in the workplace. More central to this paper, however, is the liberal feminist notion of gender justice. John Stuart Mills, in the genesis of liberalism, argued that patriarchal society believes women are ideally suited only to certain occupations (Tong, 1989).

The analysis by liberal feminists is that women's oppression, historically, has resided in their exclusion from access to the public sphere, especially from education and the public workplace. These limited roles, according to Tong (1989, p. 28) have been used as excuses or justification to exclude women from "the academy, the forum, and the market place".

It is a key premise of this paper that women are marginalised, not only in male-dominated professions but in every element of their existence, both past and present. Marginalisation of women, in a holistic sense, refers to the manner in which women are relegated to the outskirts [or margins] of: our knowledge; our language; our history; our values; and the development for the future of all the aforementioned.

Women have been made invisible in the writings of our history. Little historical documentation details the role and impact women have had in the evolution of human kind over hundreds of years, as though women were passive bystanders throughout all those events in time that required action, strength, courage, sacrifice and hard work.

Not only has women's experience been ignored but when it has been documented it has been distorted (Oakley and Friedan cited in Stanley, 1983). Writing from a male-centred perspective, most historians have placed men as the key subjects and positioned women in relation to them (Hughes, 1994). Efforts are being made within contemporary feminist literature to revise written history, so as to include the contribution women have made to the development of humankind. This will provide an analysis of events, which have impacted upon women in particular, from a woman's perspective.

Feminist discourse has brought to the contemporary theoretical forum the awareness that women have been, and still are, excluded from the production of cultural forms. Language is an integral cultural form and our English language excludes the feminine from it. With intention or not, men have formulated a semantic rule which positions them as central, as the norm, and they have classified the world from that reference point. Men have engaged in this process for some time, therefore, the silence of women has been a cumulative process. Conceptually and materially excluded from the production of knowledge, women's meanings and experiences have been systematically blocked out (Spender, 1985).

This exclusion of the feminine form in our language provides the dominant group, the language makers (men) with a linguistic device, both verbal and written, which further renders women as invisible. In so doing, women's oppression and marginalisation is perpetuated.

This paper supports a key premise of feminist theory that knowledge is socially constructed. We come to know through various institutions, structures and social phenomena operating within our society or spheres of influence. We are not born knowing but rather learn and construct knowledge of our world by absorbing information and the affective values of those people and social structures that operate within our environs and have great influence over us.

Feminist theorists argue that this socially-constructed knowledge is phallogocentric because of the patriarchal nature of our existence. That is to say that our human epistemology, incorporating those unchallenged assumptions, is constructed through the eyes of a male "Weltanschauung". Women have been excluded as the producers of knowledge and as the subjects of knowledge. Men

have made their own knowledge and their own gender representative of society. Using the male experience as the norm or as a yard-stick, female experience falls at the other end of a bi-polar scale (Spender, 1981; Stanley, 1983). Ready generalisations are made from the experience of males to the whole population. This male world view permeates the heart of organisational culture and among other things has a deleterious effect on the opportunities of women to fully participate in the workplace. This is particularly so if that workplace has had a tradition of male dominated participation.

2.2 MARGINALISATION WITHIN FEMINISM

For the purpose of this thesis it is vital that there be a clear understanding of the term "marginalisation" as it refers to women. In an holistic sense, rather than a specific labour market sense, marginalisation is not restricted to women, since both indigenous people and people from ethnic backgrounds experience social, economic and workplace marginalisation in Australia. It is acknowledged that feminist paradigms have identified and explored the marginalisation of women in society, (Spender, 1983; Stanley & Wise, 1993; Tong, 1989; Witz, 1992) and more specifically the greater marginalisation, within Australia, of women from non-English-speaking backgrounds (Hughes, 1994). Researchers, such as Spencer and Podmore (1987), have identified marginalisation as being an important negative aspect of women's employment.

Factors contributing to the marginalisation of women include: the existence of stereotypes about women, their work and the nature of professions; the significance of sponsorship and role models toward building a successful professional career; the importance of informal relationships; the concept of

professional commitment; and the unplanned nature of women's careers. It is this element of feminist theory that will be tested against the career experience of women who have left the Western Australia Police Force. The research, which is the subject of this paper, is grounded within a broad feminist perspective. In part, it will examine whether factors which contribute to the marginalisation of women in male dominated professions, as identified by Spencer and Podmore (1987), apply in the case of women who have left the Western Australia Police Force and whether these factors significantly contributed to their not returning to their chosen career.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY: WOMEN IN MALE DOMINATED PROFESSIONS

Parallelling the growth of academic and popular knowledge on the historical and contemporary status of women in policing is an emerging consciousness of the existence of women in male dominated professions. There is, however, a paucity of literature relating to women who work in a male dominated environment. What literature there is indicates a strong support for the notion that women who choose to participate in those occupations historically considered to be the domain of men are marginalised. Historical and contemporary literature asserts that women who have entered traditionally male dominated occupations have faced discriminatory hiring, promotion and assignment policies, opposition and sexual harassment from male co-workers, and inadequate on the job training and socialisation (Farnworth, 1992, p. 278).

For the purpose of this chapter, a labour market definition of marginalisation is that there is a set of implicit rules which militate against women in organisations. Female participation in the workforce is restricted by male perceptions of their ability as workers and the appropriateness of their work. The work they do and the level at which they operate within an organisation is determined by these implicit rules. Marginalisation, as it occurs in the labour market generally and specifically in the professions, has definable and interlinked indicators. These marginalising factors include the existence of stereotypes about women, their work and the nature of professions; the significance of sponsorship and role models toward building a successful professional career; the importance of informal relationships; the concept of professional commitment; and the unplanned nature of women's careers (Spencer and Podmore, 1987; Lahtinen & Wilson, 1994). These themes provide a framework for exploring the impediments to women's participation in male-dominated professions generally and more specifically policing in Western Australia.

3.1 STEREOTYPES OF WOMEN, THEIR WORK AND THE NATURE OF PROFESSIONS.

The perception that stereotypes exist about women, their work and the nature of professions, goes beyond that represented in organisational literature. It is a perception which, to date, has been embodied and embedded in our socially constructed learning.

Gender differences are deeply embedded in the beliefs and practices of our organisations. They often occur in the day-to-day decisions regarding recruitment, assignment of tasks, performance appraisal, promotion and pay.

(Cahoon, 1991, p. 14)

This perception is not restricted to those professions which, to date, have been male dominated. Rather these perceptions operate within the community's everyday existence and manifest themselves with a deleterious effect on women within, among other things, a labour market or professional setting.

These stereotypes take the form of a perception that women's innate characteristics mean that they are 'emotional', 'unstable' and 'not decisive enough'. Furthermore, because of these innate characteristics, women are not suited to particular professions. Those professions in question are also subject to their own stereotypes: that is, they are prohibited to women because they are physically demanding, 'combative', and hence unsuited to women (Spencer and Podmore, 1987, p. 2) The logical sequence is that women, because of their innate

characteristics, are unable to attain professional status in such male dominated occupations, where this status and femininity are perceived as contradictory. An example of this is the legal profession. The number of women entering this field has steadily increased in recent years. Although close to 50% of law graduates in Western Australia are now women we cannot assume that their entry into the system will mean gender equality. The Western Australian report of the Chief Justice's Task force on Gender Bias (1994) stated that as at 30th June 1993, although 26% of the profession holding practice certificates were women, only 10.2% of the partners in legal practices were women and 67.5% of women lawyers were employees. Only 5.4% of the partners in the five largest law firms in Perth were women.

This situation is not unique to Western Australia. In the United States the number of females achieving senior legal positions who are married, with children is almost nil, while the number of men who are married with children moving into the same positions is almost 90% (Malcolm, 1994). It would be safe to argue that law remains a male dominated and male orientated profession. Similar results have been found in medicine, engineering, academia and public sector management (McAuley, 1987; Newton, 1985; Still, 1992; Still, 1993).

The sexual division of labour in mass production plants is used as an example by Game and Pringle (1984) to highlight the use of binary opposition to further oppress and marginalise women within the white goods industry. Their argument is based on a series of polarities which are broadly equated with masculinity and femininity. They claim the most obvious distinction is between skilled and unskilled. Others include: heavy/light, dirty/clean, dangerous/less dangerous, interesting/boring, mobile/immobile.

The first of each of these pairs is held to be appropriate for men, or men are assumed to be better at it. The second is seen as 'appropriately female'. In the case of women, nature is seen to play a greater part than that for men. Women, it is thought, are naturally better at boring, fiddly and sedentary work. These polarities or binary opposition operate across the manufacturing industry as a whole. They serve not only to define jobs within industry but across industries as well. Industries such as mining are defined as 'male' because they are heavy or dangerous. Electronics are defined as 'female' because they involve work that is light and clean. In male-dominated industries such as sugar refining, (skilled, mobile or heavy work), women are concentrated in such areas as packaging (light, repetitive, immobile) (Game & Pringle, 1984).

Williams (1992) refers to this phenomenon as vertical occupational segregation. This term is used to describe the way in which men are most commonly found working in the highest levels within occupations, while women are marginalised to the lower grade occupations and the lowest levels within the same occupations. As an example, women predominate in the teaching of young children (low status) whilst men predominate at tertiary level lecturing (high status).

As a concluding comment on the stereotypes that exist about women, their work, and the nature of professions, Game and Pringle (1984) state that the lack of inherency in respect of the gender divisions of jobs indicates clear support that the gender definition of work, and the sexual division of labour, are socially and historically constructed. Men more successfully enter a spread of both men's and women's occupations, while at the same time maintaining exclusive control over the former. This suggests that men are the gatekeepers of gender segregation.

There is nothing inherent in jobs that makes them either appropriately female or male. If anything remains fixed, it is the distinction between men's work and women's work (Cockburn, 1991). As men's work becomes similar to women's work in a particular workplace, women will be allocated different jobs, and the nature of women's work redefined in order to maintain a distinction between the sexes (Game & Pringle, 1984).

3.2 THE SPONSORSHIP SYSTEM

The sponsorship system or mentoring is often described as involving a veteran professional who takes an active interest in the career development of a younger professional. Mentoring is an interactive process whereby mentors

- (a) encourage the dreams and support the career aspirations of their proteges;
- (b) provide opportunities for the proteges to observe and participate in their work; and
- (c) help their proteges become aware of the unwritten rules and politics involved in the profession.

(Wright & Wright, 1987, p. 36)

Mentoring is a supportive relationship between two or more people with many dimensions. It has been touted into the nineties as a highly complex, people-related skill which has "the power to enhance: knowledge; emotional stability; problem solving and decision making ability; creativity; opportunity; generativity in individuals, and morale and productivity in organisations and professions" (Carden, 1990, p.276).

This process may take the form of career pathing; introductions to the right network of people; steering the mentee away from low status work; imparting valuable historical knowledge of the organisation; and facilitating informal associations to keep abreast of the current status of work. This is said to be difficult for women within male dominated professions due to the lack of senior women. Carden (1990) suggests that the interests of women are best served if they have a woman mentor.

Although most of the mentoring models and research are based on the white male experience, mentorship may be equally, if not more, important for women. Wright and Wright (1987) cite studies conducted in the early eighties which conclude that mentorship was a critical factor in the success of professional women's careers and contend that there is a shortage of female mentors in business, academia and other professions. They also believe that mentors choose proteges with whom they identify and identification is likely to depend on age, gender and social class. For this reason many women and minorities lack mentors who can be instrumental in their careers.

Mixed gender sponsorship relationships can be fraught with dangers. Participants in a male/female mentoring relationship must transcend the sexual tensions and keep the relationship on a career basis. They are also at risk of gossip, jealous spouses and talk of favouritism. A female protege may not be able to use her male mentor as a role model in the area of balancing family and work, especially if the male mentor began his career in a traditional family with a wife at home to take care of the children and household (Wright & Wright, 1987).

With there presently being so few women in high level positions there is a lacuna of knowledge about the nature of women as mentors and the characteristics of women mentors. Yoder (cited in Carden, 1990) conducted a study of women graduates from an American Military Academy. She labelled what she observed as the reluctance of successful women within male dominated occupations to actively sponsor novice women, as the "queen bee syndrome". Yoder argues that the paucity of female mentors is a logical sequence of differences in opportunities and other situational constraints inherent in the role of the token woman. Yoder identifies three situational constraints to the mentoring activities of token women who have made it in a male dominated profession:

- (a) performance pressure due to the greater visibility of tokens;
- (b) uncertainty of established tokens about how to relate to token newcomers; and
- (c) chronic conditional acceptance of tokens by the dominant group.

(Yoder cited in Carden, 1990, p. 292)

Although it is difficult to institutionalise mentoring programs it is nevertheless possible. Schwartz (1992) cites the example of the Corning Company, which has found that mentoring has made a difference in its ability to promote and retain women. It has been found within that company that women move up faster through the organisation with the benefit of a mentor who holds a higher rank.

The assignment of women to training units as instructors and the pairing of new women with more experienced female members provides role models and mentors in a less threatening female environment (Linn & Price, 1985).

Crouch (1985) found that when women worked with other women as prison guards in men's prisons their confidence increased as did their assertiveness and problem solving skills. It was also noted that women learned to trust their own judgement faster, when working with other women, than when working with men.

3.3 ROLE MODELS, PEERS AND INFORMAL RELATIONSHIPS

There is evidence from Bandura's (1977) work that we learn most effectively from models we like or respect and models with whom we have most in common. Thus, females within an organisation will benefit most from professional role models who are female. Crouch (1985) posits that socialisation involves learning appropriate behaviour both in terms of what to do in a given workplace situation and in terms of a general style or role that could be adopted, particularly in male dominated professions. Farnworth (1992), in her study of female prison officers at Pentridge, comments that female officers had special problems learning how to do the job. She asserted that new female officers felt that had they observed a more experienced female officer interacting with prisoners they would have learnt more job related skills. Crouch (1985) supports this notion and adds that women prison officers may have difficulties with respect to defining and learning appropriate role behaviour due to the shortage of female officer role models. Women prison officer recruits must rely on male role models, which often presents a problem since women often bring to the work setting cultural experiences that make modelling their behaviour on male prison guards difficult. Difficulties experienced with role models not only hamper advancement throughout an organisation but can also be one of the most stressful aspects of the female prison guards' job (Crouch, 1985).

Informal relationships are the key to successful integration into any organisation and men are the gatekeepers. When a man joins a male-dominated organisation, his colleagues or his "mates", may invite him for social drinks after work to "fill him in on everything he has to know." He may be invited to play golf on Sunday morning; he may be invited to Wednesday night's card game; he may be asked to play in the social club cricket team; he may be taken out on someone's 'buck's night'. It is in this informal situation that acceptance is bestowed upon the newcomer. In a male-dominated profession, males set the rules of social interaction. As such, the same acceptance is not granted to the new woman in the male dominated organisation as it is to her male counterpart. As a result, women are not privy to the important work related information being commented upon; they are not engaging in supportive managerial relations and, as such, they are not able to take full advantage of the benefits of 'networking'.

Crouch (1985) noted from his studies on women guards in men's prisons that these women faced several barriers to their progression through the corrective organisation. It was identified that the lack of role models and informal associations was high among the reasons for women's lowered expectations of successful careers.

Of greater concern is the fact that many women employed in male dominated professions are employed as token females. Women within a prison system are often the only female on that shift, or at that facility or unit, or often the only woman in a particular region. Some women may not get to speak to another female colleague until the shift change when they have a brief chance to talk or socialise.

These brief interludes are insufficient time for women to be able to network, seek support, ask advice, discuss problems or enjoy the companionship and recognise the value of other women. Lunneborg (1989) claims that this token status in any male dominated work environment means that these women come under a disproportionate amount of scrutiny, which further reduces their confidence.

3.4 THE CONCEPT OF PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT

The difficulty in assessing a woman's commitment to a career or professional field is that in providing a measurement we are in fact using a male constructed view of what it is to be committed. We are using the male definition of career commitment as the "norm" and whatever falls outside that definition is to be "less committed".

There exists a male notion of professional commitment which bears the implication of "all or nothing". Women who use sick leave to stay at home to care for unwell children; who run household errands in their lunch break; who are called away from work to attend aging or ill parents; who go straight home when finishing work to tend to family needs; and who require career breaks to bear and rear infants; are seen as being less committed to their careers. Men who are committed to their careers do not succumb to these impediments whereas women do.

Organisations have been shaped and fashioned by men and remain a masculine domain. Social codes and beliefs about management have been constructed from stereotypical male traits and experiences. For women pursuing a management career this masculine management culture has a number of

consequences, including misconceptions about their commitment and stereotypical assumptions about their competency.

(Thomson, 1993, p. 7)

This misconception about career commitment is compounded by the unplanned nature of many women's careers. While, typically, men's careers are planned women's careers suffer from breaks and hiatuses (Spencer & Podmore, 1987). The male notion of career commitment assumes unbroken service as an indicator of such commitment.

Lahtinen and Wilson (1994) believe there is a myth about pregnancy in the minds of employers. The myth is the belief that women will leave to have babies and that organisational wastage due to pregnancy is greater than for any other reason. In a 1994 study conducted by Angle and Perry (cited in Lahtinen & Wilson, 1994) mothers were found not to be less committed to their work and careers than fathers and in fact it was found that some employers found women to be more committed to their careers than men. One explanation offered is that women have fewer mobility career opportunities so they tend to become restricted. Lahtinen and Wilson (1994) suggest that the myth of lack of career commitment by women may have come about because of the resistance of men to accept women into managerial positions.

The 1989 Fitzgerald Inquiry in Queensland identified the existence of misconceptions attached to beliefs about women in policing in that state. There was a common belief that women are less committed to a career in policing than their male colleagues.

On closer examination it was found that over a five year period prior to the inquiry a greater proportion of men than women resigned from the Queensland Police Force and that those women who had resigned, had served longer than the males.

CHAPTER 4

LITERATURE REVIEW: WOMEN IN POLICING

More specific than the general literature which exists about women in male dominated professions, is that literature detailing the experience of women in policing. Considerable literature, largely from the United States and Britain, shows that women still face marginalisation in police employment (Adler, 1990; Crisp, 1988; Edwards, 1990; Hindman, 1975; Martin, 1990; Potts, 1981; Potts, 1983). This body of knowledge includes women's histories in police organisations, recruitment issues, current employment issues, promotion and attrition. A review of this literature follows.

4.1 HISTORY

Histories of policing (Balkin, 1988; Carrier, 1988; Hirst, 1990) show that women have been involved in Police Departments from the beginning of the century. In Britain, women were first appointed to a police force in 1916. In the U.S.A., women were employed as prison matrons from 1845, although it was not until 1910 that a regular woman police officer was appointed to an American police force. By 1945 only 210 American cities had appointed women police officers. These women formed a separate branch or section, or, as in London, a separate parallel force. By 1960 only 2% of American police officers were women (Balkin, 1988).

The Australian experience of female participation in policing reflects that of other countries. In Western Australia, Helen Dugdale and Laura Chipper were appointed to the force on the 1st of September, 1917. These two women, together with Ruth Dunlop, dominated the work of women police in Perth from 1917 to 1943 (Stella, 1990).

Women were initially employed as prison matrons, with a limited function. Their participation was restricted to what were thought to be the "feminine" tasks of dealing with juveniles, families, and female offenders and providing clerical support to male officers (Worden, 1993). The first three of Western Australia's women police were white Anglo-Saxons born before 1885 and trained to work in the field of nursing or welfare. They were selected to police the morals of young women and children and were considered to have the attributes appropriate for such a role. O'Brien (1960, p. 26) captures the essence of the early policewomen's perceived value in his account of the 1923 Victorian Police Strike. He writes

Victoria's two policewomen played a vigorous part during the ...
strike. Miss Davidson was living in a hostel... and daily she
helped to feed the men who remained loyal.

There is evidence that even members of the police found it difficult to know just how to address women police. When Western Australia's Ruth Dunlop's first grandchild was born in 1943, the event was mentioned in the Police Union Journal. She was referred to as "Mrs Woman Police Constable Dunlop" (Stella, 1990).

Following the appointment of the women police, feminist social reformers persistently challenged the restricted numbers of women police, their duties and lack of autonomy. In response to this lobbying throughout the interwar period, the Commissioners Connell, Douglas and Hunter confirmed the role of the women police as that of preventative welfare. As Stella (1990, p. 14) argues, this definition of the role of the women police was used to restrict their numbers and their duties and justify their position as a minor branch of the police department.

This narrow definition of the female role enabled the Commissioner to deny the women police access to promotion and prevent them from being trained in criminal investigation.

In Western Australia no woman police constable was promoted to the rank of Sergeant until after the second World War. The Women's Police Unit remained under the control of the Commissioner and Inspectors of the Central Police Station, and their numbers were not increased until the second world war when there were renewed fears of the spread of venereal disease. The primary function of the women police as "morals police" was confirmed.

It has only been within the last twenty years that women have been fully integrated members of police forces throughout the world (1973 Britain, 1976 Western Australia). There is still much concern however (Adler, 1990; Brown & Campbell, 1991; Hochstedler, 1984; Prenzler, 1992) that history, policy, practice and attitude combine to prevent women participating in policing and progressing through the ranks to senior positions. In theory, women have equal opportunities to apply to become police officers. Research (Bell, 1982; Edwards, 1990; Lunneborg, 1989; Potts, 1983) shows, however, that despite legislation requiring that police departments afford equal employment opportunities to men and women, women are not accepted, retained or promoted in proportion to the numbers that apply to join police departments, compared to men. Although women are gaining entry into policing in greater numbers there are still implicit barriers which marginalise women within a police career.

4.2 RECRUITMENT ISSUES

The recruitment policy of most organisations is based on certain values or assumptions. Police departments have, traditionally, operated on an implicit policy of police work being men's work. Women were explicitly recruited for work with women and children and were thought to be unsuitable for other kinds of police work. Recently recruitment of women into policing has undergone some change. Police organisations no longer employ women with the explicit objective of having them deal with women and children and have made efforts to integrate them into mainstream police work..

Police forces throughout the world traditionally used the quota system for restricted employment of females. Those who did gain entry had to satisfy certain height and weight criteria and only a restricted number of women were recruited each year. This form of recruiting criteria has been legislated against throughout Britain, the USA and Australia. Police forces then turned to a physical performance evaluation (PPE) which, it was claimed, was job related. It is argued within the literature (Brown & Campbell, 1991; Jones, 1986; Lunneborg, 1989; Potts, 1983; Potts, 1983) that this PPE has further excluded women as it is based on an element of strength, fitness and agility attributable to an average fit man but not necessarily the norm for women. The PPE does not take into account or make allowances for gender differences of build nor does it make allowances for age differences. It is touted as being a recruiting criteria which epitomises equal employment opportunity.

Spencer and Podmore (1987, p. 162) argue that it is not sufficient for an organisation to carry the disclaimer that it is an equal opportunity employer, since "in some cases this message may have as much sincerity of intent as do health warnings on cigarette advertisements".

Recruiting for the 1990s is still surrounded with scepticism. The 1989 Queensland Fitzgerald Inquiry identified that women comprised 25% of applicants for the Queensland Police Force but that an informal process had operated to keep the number of female police officers selected in any intake to between 5% and 12% (Fitzgerald, 1989).

4.3 CURRENT EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

The literature details evidence of marginalised deployment of women throughout all sections of policing, and in police forces throughout the world. Bell (1982) cited studies which showed that U.S. policewomen predominated in clerical jobs. Prenzler (1992) reviewed more recent studies which indicated that little had changed. He cited Martin (1990) and Felkenes (1991) which showed that women tended to have more administration and staff support assignments than men who predominated in specialised uniform, tactical and patrol support units. Furthermore, women tended to leave patrol earlier to take desk jobs and were under represented in vice and investigative units. Prenzler (1992) suggests that sex-based differences in the way women are deployed may be because women prefer inside jobs and dislike patrol work, but this is not supported within the literature.

In Australia, women are represented in patrol, investigation, traffic, rescue squad and hostage negotiation: however they are not present in the tactical response group, the dog squad, special weapons groups or air wing (Sutton, 1992). These findings were supported by Jones (1986) in a provincial British police force and Brown and Campbell (1991) in a study on Strathclyde Police.

4.4 PROMOTION

The literature highlights the varied methods of determining suitability for promotion. Some police departments create a pool of suitable people, others require a written examination and supervisor's evaluation and some use other criteria such as seniority or simply the choice of the chief (Hochstedler, 1984; Martin, 1990). It was noted by Prenzler (1992) that those processes with the most space for subjectivity, such as personal choice and supervisor's reports, had the most adverse impact on women's prospects. With women having entered policing in increasing numbers only in recent years it is not surprising that seniority also has an adverse impact.

Women face several barriers to promotion. In a study conducted by Poole and Pogrebin (1988) they noted that although many women stated that promotion was important to them on joining, three years later only a small number still aspired to senior ranks. They suggested that this might be due to factors indicative of the marginalisation of women. The lack of role models, acknowledgment and acceptance of resistance from male peers and lowered expectation due to relative powerlessness and low mobility, were all cited as factors contributing to marginalisation.

Brown and Campbell (1991) cite evidence from other studies and their own that show women want a fully integrated role within police organisations and that 31% had applied for specialist positions, but thought their lack of service, lack of experience and the sexist attitudes of male seniors would inhibit their chances.

It was further noted by Poole and Pogrebin (1988) that women are often excluded from informal associations with superiors resulting in their not having access to important work-related information, supportive managerial relations and opportunity for advancement. This evidence of marginalisation is supported by Lunneborg (1989) who reports that progress through the organisation is difficult due to the token status of women. Lunneborg claims that due to there being so few women in any unit of a police department these women come under a disproportionate amount of scrutiny.

On the basis of her research on women executives, Kanter (1977) identifies three salient consequences of the token status of women in an overwhelmingly masculine environment. First tokens are perceived as "in" but not "of" the organisation and as they are extremely visible, they experience stressful performance pressures. Second, because of this high visibility, tokens attract a disproportionate amount of peer scrutiny. Their atypical position in the organisation tends to polarise the difference between the tokens (women) and the dominants (men). Third, the attributes and actions of these tokens are perceived as fitting the stereotypes that dominants believe to be true about the token group. However Ott (1989) found that once the proportion of women rose above tokenism they were then seen as competitors and hence opposed by male colleagues.

4.5 ATTRITION

Historically, management has perceived that women are not worth hiring, training or promoting due to the likelihood of their falling pregnant and resigning for family reasons. Furthermore it is considered that once women have children they are beset with child care problems. Several studies have shown a higher turnover rate for women than men (Brown and Campbell, 1990; Fry, 1983; Martin, 1990) but that turnover rate has been marginal.

It is thought that men resign to take on another job with greater prospects, but women leave for children, family reasons or to follow their husband who is transferred. The implication is that women have less organisational or career commitment and are less involved in their work as contrasted to men. This has been shown not to be the case in a review of studies on working women presented by Lahtinen and Wilson (1994).

Martin (1990) showed in her study that child care was a significant issue for 16% of men and 38% of women. Prenzler (1992) cited evidence from another study that 59% of officers in the Los Angeles Police Department had one or more children and the nature of police work being shift work, overtime, emergencies and transfers made the balancing of home life and career very difficult. With the current expectations of women as child-raisers and home makers, this is of particular impact to women.

4.6 RETURNERS

Of key interest to this paper is the opportunity for women, who have resigned due to family commitments or other reasons, to return to their police career. The London Metropolitan Force is regarded as a leader in the field of equal opportunities and according to Lock (1990) police managers within that organisation have become convinced of the need to attract women back after maternity leave. They see it as not only a saving on training, but the presence of mature, family officers is seen as good for the image and stability of the service. This was seen as such a valuable initiative that in 1990 the Home Office Research Unit in London produced a working party report entitled *Policewomen Returners as a Recruiting Strategy*. Apart from this there is a scarcity of literature on this particular issue. It is this lack of investigative literature, in Australia, on the topic of policewomen returners, that compels a study of the factors affecting the discontinuance of female police careers and an identification of factors affecting their decision not to rejoin.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

5.1 MODEL OF ANALYSIS

Recognition of the value of feminist theory to provide an explanation of the experiences of women in male dominated professions suggested the employment of a methodology in harmony with, and sharing the basic assumptions of, feminist ideology.

Quantitative methods of data collection were valuable tools to indicate the size of the problem for this study. Initial quantitative analysis of the attrition rates for women in the Western Australia Police Force showed that 45 women had resigned and not returned to the force over the last four years. This is not a large figure in itself but the number of women recruited into the force in that same four year period was only 92. Attrition is a significant concern then, since the net gain in that four year period is only half the number of women recruited.. Quantitative analysis in this instance was able to indicate there was a problem but not its aetiology, its impact on women nor implications for future targets for a more equitable representation of women within the police force. It also had serious limitations for this study, despite being a valuable indicative tool, since it downgrades the importance of the persona and of experience (Reinhartz, 1992; Roberts, 1990).

This study is research *for* women rather than *on* women. Bowles and Duelli Klein (1983, p. 90) define research for women as research that tries to take women's needs, interests and experiences into account and aims at being instrumental in improving women's lives in one way or another. It was felt that this could not be achieved using a quantitative methodology.

Qualitative methods of data collection hold basic axioms that are in sympathy with feminist ideology. These axioms include: the acceptance and embracing of multiple and intangible realities rather than one single reality; the recognition of the value of inquirer/respondent interactivity; the acceptance of a multiplicity of truth statements; and the acceptance and encouragement of the role played by values in qualitative studies (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). It was decided that a qualitative methodological approach would best serve the women who were to be interviewed, the interviewer, and, as a consequence, the study by providing the means with which to elicit the multiplicity of responses expected from the women.

5.2 INSTRUMENT

Semi-structured interviews were chosen, to facilitate the active involvement of the participants in the construction of their experiential data. Interviewing is an appealing technique amongst feminist researchers as it offers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. This is a particularly important asset if the contention is held that for centuries women's ideas have been ignored altogether or that men have done the speaking for them (Reinharz, 1992). There are other issues associated with interviewing within a feminist paradigm such as: its historical significance; the importance of avoiding control over others; women interviewing women; the interactive relationship of participant and researcher; and the extent and nature of researcher self disclosure. However for the purpose of this study an acknowledgment of the complex nature of interviewing within a feminist paradigm will suffice.

It was decided to conduct interviews with as many women as it was possible to contact who had left the police force within the last four years [n=45]. A letter was drafted outlining the purpose of the study, its parameters, the voluntary nature of the women's involvement and the confidentiality and anonymity of the research. This letter was sent under the aegis of the Assistant Commissioner (Personnel) [Appendix A] and forwarded by the Western Australia Police Force to female members who had resigned within the last four years, encouraging them to make contact with the researcher at either a work number or at home. By forwarding the invitation to participate in this manner it was thought that the women's privacy would be respected and that they would feel happier knowing that their personal details of employment had not been given to a stranger.

A semi-structured interview schedule was designed in consultation with serving female police officers and women from other male-dominated professions. The schedule was trialed on two serving female members of the organisation. It was felt that by trialing the interview schedule on these two women it would validate the questions as to their relevance to a policing environment without reducing the already small potential sample group of leavers. A semi-structured interview was seen as more beneficial to the research than an open-ended interview, as the study's purpose, in part, was to test whether women experienced marginalisation within their police careers. As such, there had to be an element of structure to the schedule addressing those factors contributing to female marginalisation within male-dominated professions.

5.3 PROCEDURE

Letters inviting participation in the research study were sent to all 45 women throughout Western Australia and the eastern states. Some letters [n=8] were returned to the researcher marked "not at this address". Police personnel records were again searched and the address of the next of kin was obtained so that those invitations returned could be re-addressed. Of the 45 letters sent to women who had resigned from the Western Australia Police Force within the last four years only ten responded with an acceptance to participate. Some had moved interstate and did not respond, some had married and moved to the country and others [n=8] were still living in Perth at the address the letters were sent to but, for whatever reason, chose not to respond. Networking by the accepters was used to increase the size of the sample group to 15, although three of these 15 had left the police force between eight and ten years ago. It was decided to keep these women in the sample group to test if their responses were similar to those of the women who had left more recently. Although no comparative analysis would be made, it was interesting to note whether their responses differed. The sample now represented 30% of the number of women who had left policing within the last four years and was considered a large enough group from which to collect experiential data.

Upon acceptance, participants were sent a letter confirming their willingness to be interviewed and acknowledging the ethical issues involved in such a study [Appendix B & C]. A copy of the interview schedule was included in the letter of confirmation [Appendix D]. This was seen as being an important strategy as some women had been out of policing for a longer period than others and may not have reflected on their police experience recently. This gave the women a chance to think about their responses prior to the interview.

The women were then contacted by phone to establish receipt of the confirmation letter and to request an appointment to speak with the researcher. The interviews were conducted independently of each other in a place and at a time determined by, and deemed to be most convenient to, the participant. The interview locations ranged from the kitchen bench whilst feeding the baby to the "Crib" room [lunch room] of a police station. This convenience, familiarity and friendliness was seen as being important, not only because it was well grounded within a feminist ideology, but also because it was considered vital to the collection of rich qualitative data. Some participants were interviewed alone [n=7] whilst others were happy to have children [N=6], mothers or girlfriends [n=2] present. The duration of the interviews averaged one and half hours although some were as long as two and a half hours, depending entirely on how much the participant wanted to share, digress, explore and interact with the researcher.

The interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the participant.. The researcher informed them of the convenience of recall with a tape recording and the accuracy of transcribing. Participants generally accepted the recording of the interviews, although some did not. It was felt by some [n=2] that the information would get back to the police and they would suddenly experience repercussions. A further three were not recorded as their interviews were conducted by telephone, since the participants were living in country locations not accessible to the researcher. At the outset of each interview the participants were reminded of their voluntary participation in the study, the fact that they could withdraw their consent at any time throughout the interview and that they did not have to answer any question they were not happy to answer. A precis of her interview was sent to each interviewee so that participants might object to or dispute any of the data recorded.

This ensured that the transcription was a valid interpretation of the experiential data collected from the participant. This strategy went some way to addressing the issue of the validity of the study.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS

This chapter will present the findings of what the participants recalled about the experience of their police careers. The findings will be presented in a thematic structure rather than a question by question analysis as the women's responses formed five main themes. The demographic nature of the sample group will be presented first, followed by the women's in-service experiences, their perceptions of support networks, the experience of their leaving, their perceptions of returning and, finally, other interesting data that emerged.

6.1 DEMOGRAPHY

Of the 15 women interviewed, all were single and childless when they joined the Western Australia Police Force. Their ages at joining ranged from 19 through to 25 years, with a mean age of 21 years. All of the women interviewed were white Australians from an English speaking background.

Length of service ranged from 4 years through to 15 years, with a mean of 7 years police experience. The level of education attained by the women fell into three categories. Achievement certificate level [year 8 high school] was recorded by two participants, whilst nine had attained the TEE level [year 12 high school] and four had commenced an undergraduate tertiary qualification prior to joining the force.

At the time of their resignation from the Western Australia Police Force, 12 of the women were married, nine of them to police officers, whilst three remained single. Nine of the women were expecting babies and two had small children on resignation.

When the women were asked their motivations for joining the police force, their responses were similar. Their reasons included: having a long held desire to be involved in policing; having family members in the job; a like of the military aspect to the organisation; and liking the thought of a non-traditional career. The most popular response was that the work held such variety and diversity of career paths, unlike the traditional career options offered for women.

6.2 IN-SERVICE

The women were asked a series of questions related to the types of postings they received once they had graduated from the academy, the tasks they were allocated within those appointments and their peer and supervisor treatment of them during their work experience.

The women's postings were all similar. Once leaving the academy all participants were sent to a large central pool for new officers. This central pool is likened to a teaching station, where new officers learn how to police within a city beat environment. From there they were transferred to another station within the city for more of the same type of experience. The first two years of their police career were probably no different from that of their male colleagues other than the females' perception that they stayed at these teaching stations longer than their male colleagues.

Commented one woman:

At A [the teaching station], the men didn't want us as partners and the Sergeants would expect you to prove yourself all the time.

Another said

The problem at A was that there were so many women at it because the Sergeants out in the suburbs were saying that they didn't want a woman at their station, and it meant the pool at A was growing.

In the end they had to say too bad, you have to take one because there were patrols going out with women pairs and they didn't like that.

The women who had left prior to 1991 were less critical in their responses. They had joined the force when women were still part of the Women's Police Unit and their comments on postings were a little more tempered. They expressed their thankfulness at being able to participate in policing no matter what the role.

I stayed at A for 18 months but in those days there wasn't a lot of choice. Women were not allowed to go to suburban stations. So you had a choice of A or a big regional centre. You were limited to what you could do. We weren't resentful, you were grateful for what you got, we knew no better in those days.

Another commented:

I went from the academy straight out to B and stayed there for a long time. I felt I was being protected by not going out on the street to work and do street policing and now I regret that I was too young and too naive to stand up and say "I want to have a go". Somehow I feel that I've been cheated.

Not only did the women perceive that they spent longer at training stations than their male colleagues but they felt that the range of opportunities was not open to them throughout their careers.

Nine of the women commented on their limited range of postings throughout their police experience. They felt that they had floated from one acceptable assignment to another: training station; law courts; child abuse unit; youth club; records; communications; and the stables. One recent leaver commented on the fact that she made it into a specialist squad only to find that she was not in a key position, despite having the highest score for the specialist skill required for that unit.

When asked about their treatment by peers and supervisors the women's responses were dichotomous. They felt that their peers for the most part, accepted female officers. This was particularly true of those who had gone through the academy and trained with women post integration. These men had paraded, studied, run, swum and shot beside women in the academy. They had seen that women were capable and competent police officers and presented less resistance but still they were not fully accepting. The women got used to the type of ridicule and put downs delivered to them at each unit to which they were assigned. They considered it part and parcel of working in a male dominated profession. The women commented:

- On the whole [the men were] accepting - not embracing, just accepting.
- I was treated well, there was very little resentment once they realised that you could be trusted.

- The young guys coming into the job have got better attitudes, but from about senior constable up, with about 13 years on them, they are hopeless. Hopefully, now that there are a lot more women around we are not as much of a novelty, we still are a real novelty but not as much.
- I had someone say to me in front of others - You don't drink and you don't smoke and you don't f... coppers: what good are you. That's the sort of thing you had to put up with.
- If the guys didn't want you there they could make it hard for you.

The treatment of the women by supervisors or Sergeants was vastly different from treatment by males of similar rank. The women recalled open resentment from supervisory staff at having to allocate women to tasks. The Sergeants were considered to be of the "old school", men who had come through policing when women were a separate unit, and did not participate in mainstream police work.

The women complained that some Sergeants would:

- give you a hard time but you learnt to stay away;
- treat you like a stupid female;
- display resentment;
- be openly hostile and engage in put downs.

The women were asked whether they perceived that they were allocated different tasks from supervisors because they were a female or whether it was because they were the new member at that unit. Many of the women [10] acknowledged that they had been allocated different tasks and saw this deployment as standard procedure since they were the only female at that posting and a female was required for that particular job. These particular jobs included search of a female offender, interview and care of a rape victim or the care of children. The women saw this work as additional or extra to their normal duties rather than their prime function. There was general agreement however, that women were allocated different tasks and assignments because of their gender. Those who felt aggrieved about their deployment commented:

- The Sergeants like to take the females out [patrolling in the van].
- More females get office duty with the Sergeants and you always get stuck with the kids.
- In the bush they are a bit in the dark ages out there. They would rack off in the van and leave me in the office all day, I would have to get on the radio and demand they come back and get me. You have to assert yourself.
- There were certain Sergeants that refused to work with females so if you didn't get on with them it was made quite difficult for you.

Some felt that they had been unfairly deployed or had witnessed other women receive duties that would not have been allocated to a man.

One woman commented:

I have seen a Sergeant walk past a busy policewoman and tell her to make him a coffee whilst a group of male constables were sitting around the desk joking about the weekend.

I have seen a male senior connie tell a female senior connie to take care of three kids. She bit back and told him to give the job to one of the males who has kids of his own, she had none and wasn't likely to have any, what did she know about kids. She got the job just the same.

The women were positive about working with the public and the notion of being able to provide a community service. The women felt that this aspect of service to the community and "making a difference" was one of the high points of their work experience. The women felt that they saw the service aspect of policing more than a male was likely to, and that they saw it as a foremost consideration. What the women were surprised about was the secondary position that the public would put the women in, when in the company of a male officer. All the women commented that when accompanied by a male partner, the public would defer to the male, they would look at him and answer to him, even if the female officer was asking the questions. This would happen even if the woman was accompanied by a male who was considerably junior to her in rank. Although the public are not necessarily expected to recognise police rank, a similar situation would happen within police partnerships. The women commented that if they were partnered by a male junior in rank to themselves "the male would automatically try to take over". The women would have to gently remind them that they were the senior officer in the inquiry.

On the subject of promotion ten felt that promotion was important to them while the remaining five felt that they didn't want to be left behind and were happy to do study units to keep up with their peers, but were not prepared to go "biting and scratching through the ranks".

One woman commented:

It wouldn't do me much good anyway, there are not many women at the top, or even in the middle, it's not easy to get to that point for a woman.

Others stated:

Initially it was but after I got married I got a different view. Not only was it no longer as important but I knew I wouldn't get promoted like my husband would.

Yes. Before merit based promotion came in I was hoping for a commissioned rank, now I doubt that I would have even got to Sergeant. For females it's worse because they don't get the experiences that count when it comes to applying for promotion.

The people who knew I had a baby would ask me when was I going non-operational. As much as I would love to have been home at regular hours with her I couldn't, because by going non-operational I would be accepting those jobs that are not valued for promotion.

6.3 SUPPORT NETWORKS

The notion of peer support is recognised as integral to the healthy functioning of any police organisation. One issue explored was whether women experience the same peer support within the organisation as their male colleagues.

All of the women spoke of the support and encouragement they received and the bond they felt with male recruits during their academy training. However they perceived that when they were out in the organisation proper, that supportive bond did not exist to the same extent. They perceived that when males went into the larger organisation they were accepted by virtue of their maleness whilst the women were not. Whilst still in the academy, before males or females are socialised into the larger culture, women are seen as ordinary members of the squad. Once they had graduated however, the women sensed a difference: the men had absorbed the values and attitudes of the dominant group, although still maintaining better attitudes to women than supervisors. The women commented:

I would hear guys I had trained with bagging women and I'd pull them up and say, hang on, remember I beat you at such and such and I saved your bacon with that essay. Then they'd say, "Yeah, you're O.K., it's the other women".

I missed the feelings of mateship I had with the guys in the academy. The guys I worked with at the stations were never as friendly and supportive. They were O.K., but never the same.

I never felt resentment from the guys at the academy but when we got out, boy, was it different.

Participants were asked questions designed to determine their perceptions of other women in policing being part of, and providing, a support network. There were significant differences between those participants who were not part of the recent leavers group. These women [n=3] had joined policing prior to integration and had worked within the Women's Police Unit (WPU), staffed entirely by women. Their responses significantly differed from the more recent leavers. The earlier leavers had worked either entirely with women, or had worked closely with women as well as men and had experienced larger numbers of policewomen in one location than those who had left more recently. The earlier leavers commented:

In those days we only went to certain locations so we worked pretty closely together. It was good we bonded well, we made friends of each other and you knew what the other one was going through and feeling.

We worked very closely together. I liked working with them. Those women I have worked with I have enjoyed and I still keep in touch with them. Integration was good for women, they were no longer seen as a special group. It was good but it lost a lot of the sisterhood that was there, that I don't think is there any more.

In the days of the WPU we would have meetings and you would get to see who the Sergeants were. They were our role models. I'm sure nowadays half the girls wouldn't know each other and I'm sure they wouldn't know anybody that was in the Sergeants ranks either.

Comments made by the recent leavers were strikingly different. They did not see women as providing a support network in policing. In fact they felt hostility and distrust toward their sisters in the job. The recent leavers commented:

No I didn't work very close. You never find many of them on your shift or that because there are not many of them around. I don't enjoy working with other women, they are too bitchy.

I hardly ever worked with another woman. Often I was the only one. I didn't see them as a support network I never had the opportunity.

I have worked with another woman as a one off thing. They are spread so thin. To be a support network you have to make the effort, there is not a lot of female bonding in the uniform branch.

Female to female we are still quite wary of each other. For the first few months we are still sussing each other out. It's hard for us to get close because there is only two or three of us on each shift, and we get split up.

6.4 LEAVING

A key aspect to this paper was to determine why women left policing and did not return to it. Women were asked what their reasons were for discontinuing their career, whether they would have considered staying on if other arrangements could be made and whether they would consider re-engaging.

Of the fifteen women who resigned, nine did so because they were pregnant and two because they had a small child at home. Of the remainder, one left to pursue an athletic career, one resigned as medically unfit, one resigned due to marital pressure, and one resigned due to a spouse transfer. The three women who were earlier leavers commented that when they became pregnant the organisation had not known what to do with them.

One woman commented:

When I got pregnant I was moved from the public eye and given a lecture by an Inspector about how I had let the side down and was transferred to

Another said:

When I left there was absolutely nothing in the Police Award for women who would leave pregnant. There was maternity leave in there but it was really an unknown area for them. I had to fight for every entitlement.

The third woman stated:

My husband was transferred to C [a north west town] I had to resign to stay at home and provide full time care for my child. I didn't know what C was like and I didn't know anything about their child care system or who I could trust, so I had to resign.

The comments of the more recent maternity leavers were no different from the earlier leavers. Although the organisation had had four or five years more to think of pregnant police officers as being acceptable, little had changed in terms of accommodation. Men within the organisation still felt uncomfortable with police officers being pregnant and pregnancy was seen as being the end of a police career.

The interviewees stories contained two main themes. First, women commented that maternity leave was not long enough to stay at home with an infant. When the time came to return to work either mother or infant or both were not ready for the event. Secondly, those who did return to work after maternity leave found that they were not able to cope returning to full time policing whilst having an infant at home.

I went back to full time for three months but I just couldn't handle it, with a new baby it was just too much work.

I was on maternity leave and you have to take it eight weeks before you are due. This means that the baby was only 10 months old by the time I had to go back to work, that's too young to leave a baby.

I know of a senior connie who had used a lot of her maternity leave up because she had a bad pregnancy, so she had to return to work when the baby was 6 weeks old. She was a mess. She asked for part time work and they said "so sad too bad". She begged with them and said "you are asking me to choose between my baby and the job I love". In the end she had to resign.

Another participant was a sole parent. Her comments were:

I had a small child and I asked for part time work and they said no. So, for two years I battled as a single mother with a small child plus doing shift work, all the time asking for part time work and even finding someone else to job share with and they just said no.

When asked whether the participants would have considered staying on if other arrangements could have been made, the overwhelming response was "yes". All participants, except the respondent who resigned for marital pressure, wanted to remain with the organisation and continue their career in policing. The greatest concern for these women was the length of maternity leave, and the lack of knowledge, encouragement and availability of part time work, job share or career breaks. The women were assertive and energetic in their responses to the question of alternatives, other than resignation, being made available.

Yes definitely (I would have stayed on) they could have avoided all of that by giving me part time work in the first place.

Yeah, it would have been great if maternity leave was longer, say two years, then we would have all been ready for me to go back.

It wouldn't take a lot of brains to work out some kind of package. It's just that no one there wants to bother thinking about it.

The husbands of two participants were serving police officers and were transferred. One woman had no-one in the country town to which they were going who could care for her child whilst both parents worked, she felt she had no option other than to resign, an action she later regretted. She commented:

In retrospect I wish I had been able to sort something out because I hated it at C and it would have been better if I was working. The other thing is I can't get back into that career because I resigned.

The other participant whose husband was transferred was much more volatile in her response. Her husband had received a transfer to a small country town but there was no place for her as a policewoman.

The regional officer, she claimed, "did not want a woman out there". The participant had applied for study leave and was granted it. Three days before they were due to leave the participant was phoned and told that her grant of study leave had been rescinded. Since she had only been married three months and did not want to be separated from her husband the respondent felt there was no option for her but to resign. Her story was:

I told them "I don't want to leave, I don't want to leave, this is not how I want to do this". They said "too bad", the union was not interested and the staff office said "make trouble for us and your husband will never get another country transfer again".

This particular participant was most scathing in her criticism of the organisation's inflexibility. She claims that she could have gone to the country station as a police officer, since she ended up doing all the tasks of a female officer, unpaid, as the wife of the station's policeman.

6.5 RETURNING

The biggest regret for all of these women was not being able to return to policing after resigning from years of police service. Childbearing and family commitments were seen as an important aspect of these years of their lives but they wished it to be only a hiatus in their careers. The women expected that once the children were of school age they would be able to recommence full time work, but believed that resignation now prohibited them from picking up that career. The basis for this prohibition lay in modified recruiting criteria which women with children find difficult to satisfy and the lack of part time and job share work arrangements.

All respondents felt that if the issue of part time work, job share arrangements and career breaks for individuals had been addressed then there would have been other options for them to deal with family commitments, rather than resigning. Since their initial enlistment in the police force, recruiting criteria had changed dramatically. To rejoin the police force these women had to compete with young men and women ten to fifteen years their junior in a physical performance evaluation [PPE]. They argued that their years of police experience, general life experience and maturity should put them in good stead for selection "compared to an inexperienced 19 year old boy". On the subject of re-engaging one woman commented:

Yes I would have loved to [rejoin] but when I applied they said that they were not taking any women at the age of 35 but I know they were taking men. The other thing is I can't satisfy the recruiting criteria for today's youngsters but then I think I have proved myself to be a good Police Officer, I shouldn't have to. There are others in the force who could not pass the test.

Another commented:

Yes I had considered rejoining until I found out the conditions. From the physical side I'm not sure what they want out of people. They are either limiting themselves to an elite area of people or placing too much importance on being physically fit. They don't take into account other experiences, the fact that I have learnt a lot since leaving. I have had to keep in touch with the real world, I can talk to anyone, I can solve problems.

On the subject of re-engaging in part time work , one woman said:

I had a phone call from employee relations to ask if I would like to do part time work but the catch was that I had to do 12 months full time work on three rotating shifts out of A before I could go to part time. I told them to stick it. I hadn't done 7 years service to go back to bloody A, especially since I had skills and knowledge from other departments.

The women saw part time, job share and career breaks as a means of retaining qualified, experienced, mature female police officers. This was seen as imperative given the small number of women in policing, the fact they are disproportionately represented in the lowest ranks and the paucity of women in the middle and senior ranks [Table 1]. They felt that their permanent loss was a waste of a valuable human resource and could not understand why the same had not occurred to the police organisation.

6.6 NOTES OF INTEREST

Other data emerged from this study that was both interesting and noteworthy. The participants were asked how many women they thought would present an ideal proportion within a police organisation. The majority [8] opted for between 20 and 30%, three felt that 10% was an appropriate number and a further three believed that there were sufficient women in the organisation now, without increasing numbers. One woman refused to take a position on an ideal proportion as she felt it was reminiscent of the days of quotas for the recruitment of women.

Not one woman suggested gender equality of numbers within policing. What all recognised was the lack of women at Sergeant level and the fact that there are no female commissioned officers. As one woman commented:

More females are needed in the senior ranks. We don't have any role models. The majority of the females , and I am talking 90%, are in the lowest ranks.

Despite this lower than expected target figure for female participation in policing, the women were nevertheless positive about the value women bring to the job. Although not happy to talk about their personal value and successes, they were eager to talk of the general value of women in policing. The participants generally thought that women brought a different way of thinking and acting to traditional male tasks and were able to demonstrate alternative methods of policing. The value of women in policing, according to these participants, included: patience and understanding; a wider perspective of thought; a less intimidating style of policing; systematic and organised work methods; and the ability to defuse a situation. One women commented:

Women are less aggressive. We are not as intimidating, not as threatening but that doesn't mean less effective. Women can often defuse a situation whereas men will inflame it.

Another stated:

I think we softened the image a bit, not weakened it though. You have to have the male/female balance in a job like policing.

The women were also asked whether they saw any problems with the organisation, or the people in it and whether they had any recommendations for organisational change. The participants' responses were surprisingly similar. They all felt that the recruiting age of the organisation should be lifted to over 21 years of age. They felt that 19 was far too young to hold such a responsible position such as police officer. They were able to cite instances where a 19 year old will "come unstuck" because of a lack of life experience, and this was compounded by the fact that two 19 year olds would now partner each other, rather than have a mature "buddy" operate with a junior member.

Further criticism was made of the inflexibility and inconsistency of the organisation. Some people would receive study leave for "podiatry courses" whilst others could not get leave for "business management". Comments were made that the explicit policy for part time or job share was vague whilst the implicit policy of unavailability was much stronger. As one recent leaver commented

I am hoping that some policy will come up regarding part time work, but something a bit more formal than the bush telegraph that exists now.

In an attempt to dissuade the participants from seeing the interview as a chance to deprecate the police organisation, and to finish the interview on a high note, the women were asked what they found to be the positive aspects of the job. Their overwhelming response was the feelings of camaraderie that was felt by everyone in the job, the friends that were made, the feelings of belonging to a large family. Another significant positive aspect of the job for women was the excitement and variety of work. They all felt that they would rather be policing with its diversity of work, opportunity for varied life experiences, and provision of service to the

people of Western Australia than any other job they could think of. The women shared consensus on the issue of police work being well paid and secure "especially for a female".

CHAPTER 7

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Analysis of the data shows the participants who are no longer employed with the Western Australia Police Force, experienced marginalisation during their police careers. Other themes shown in the analysis are the lack of recognition of this marginalisation, the lack of support networks and the negative experience of their leaving.

7.1 MARGINALISATION

None of the women expressed happiness or satisfaction with their deployment or treatment. The participants felt that the treatment they received from peers, supervisors and the public was normal for women in male dominated professions. To an external observer this demonstrates marginalisation and its lack of recognition is indicative of its endemic nature.

The participants felt that women were tolerated within the job; however, their recollections indicated a position of antagonism bordering on hostility from male colleagues, both peers and supervisors. The women interviewed acknowledged: that their work experiences were limited to those "appropriate" female positions; that they were spoken to in a derogatory manner by peers and were "put down" by supervisors; that they were the butt of jokes by their colleagues; that they were seen as a less capable and less desirable work partner; and that their chances of promotion through the organisation were limited by what opportunities were directed to them. The women's recollections identified continuing inequalities in deployment and career opportunities along with negative attitudes from longer-serving male colleagues and supervisors. These factors are all indicators of marginalisation. The attitude shown to the respondents was that women were seen as being of the organisation rather than playing an integral part in it.

All of the women in this study had only served in units that were deemed "appropriate" for females. These units included communications, suburban stations, missing persons, records, supply store, regional office and child abuse. None of the participants had experience in sections such as tactical response unit, dog squad, armed robbery, drug squad, or Division 79 [a rapid response unit to offences suspected of involving a weapon]. This pattern is consistent with other police forces throughout the western world and the tendency for men to exclude women in this manner is well documented (Adler, 1990; Balkin, 1988; Lunneborg, 1989; Martin, 1980).

Promotional opportunities within the police force are enhanced for officers serving in the valued and elite units quoted. These positions have historically been seen to epitomise what policing is all about and are considered to be unsuitable for women. Failing to post women to these valued positions results in a significantly reduced likelihood of promotion. Such exclusion of women has serious EEO implications beyond the scope of this thesis but merits further research. It is likely that promotional opportunities for officers working in these areas are better due to the perceived value these roles have in relation to breadth of experience and leadership qualities by male superiors.

Clearly males within the organisation were the gatekeepers of acceptance. Men perceived women as being unsuited to police work other than those tasks involving children, women, paperwork, records or messages. While there were exceptions, this was the prevailing attitude of men to their female colleagues. It was acknowledged by the women that if a male partner or supervisor did not like you then "they could make it hard for you".

The manner in which females were spoken to by males within the organisation was demeaning and further served to marginalise them. Derogatory comments were not made on the basis of an objective judgement of the quality of their work, their handling of certain situations, their interactions with partners or the public. Rather, these demeaning slurs were made to them on the basis of their gender. They were inappropriate, grounded in ignorance and failed to recognise the value and capabilities of females within a policing context. This behaviour of men denigrating women on the basis of gender and not performance is also well documented and may be symptomatic of a feeling of threat to the prevailing power structure.

It is clear that the Western Australia Police Force is dominated and controlled by men and that women are a very small and powerless minority [Table 1]. This powerlessness is compounded by their small numbers and the fact that they are predominantly in the most junior ranks (less than 1% of Sergeants are women) and that there are no female officers in the commissioned ranks. This, and the literature relating to women in policing, clearly indicates the broad range of challenges women face in their attempt to obtain recognition and credibility as police officers.

7.2 LACK OF RECOGNITION

Most of the tasks allocated to women beyond their normal duties included child care, coffee making, desk duties, duty driver, attending to women and the aged in distress and a myriad of other tasks 'commensurate with their gender'. This is a particularly insidious form of marginalisation since the women interviewed did not perceive that these additional tasks were marginalising but rather accepted them,

reluctantly, as the price to pay for their participation. This form of marginalisation is a good example of its covert nature.

None of the women interviewed considered that the treatment they received from their peers or supervisors had an adverse impact on their decision to resign from the police force nor did they perceive that it had an impact on their decision not to return to policing. Colleague and supervisor behaviour was excused on the grounds of it being "their territory". It was as though this was the price a woman paid for choosing to work in a profession that is dominated by males. Little conscious analysis of peer and supervisor treatment had been undertaken by the women. The participants did not recognise that their treatment was marginalising and they mounted little or no protest to it. The treatment they received from peers was seen as normal within the police environment.

Not only do women fail to recognise marginalisation but they contribute to it, in a sense, by adopting coping strategies. When asked whether they would recommend policing as a career for other women, the participants were guarded in their responses. No-one was happy to encourage other women to join the ranks. It was felt that you had to be a "special kind of woman" to put up with, not the work of policing, but the organisational culture specific to policing. This phenomenon has been borne out in the literature. Martin (1990) refers to it as the "assimilation model" of female survival as police.

A further example is the response to the question of percentages. It is interesting to note the low overall target figures for female participation in policing that the participants suggested. The current participation rate of women in the Western Australia Police Force is 9.8% and although many of the women in this study

voted for between 20 and 30% representation, the rest of the group opted for the status quo or even less. To be consistent with the view that women were of the same value as men, it would be expected they would suggest a projected participation rate approaching 50%. However when the "assimilation model" is taken into account then the targets nominated by the women can be understood as marginalisation being perpetuated, even by its victims.

While the Police Force might argue that legislation and consequent policy ensures women equal opportunities of employment, this study demonstrates that this is not the case and that legislation alone cannot ensure equality for women. The police organisation is not proactive in comprehending the ethos of EEO legislation nor is it embracing the spirit of affirmative action strategies to correct the historical imbalance of women in policing.

7.3 LEAVING

It is clear that the primary reason for these women leaving the police force was child rearing. More accurately, it was the organisation's inability to accommodate police officers who were pregnant. This organisational limitation manifested itself in a number of ways. Firstly, police officers who were pregnant were removed from public view, not as a safety issue but rather because they were an anomaly, and possibly an embarrassment. Hiding the issue of pregnancy not only isolates the women and further marginalises them, it also reduces the extent to which the organisation and the community can become desensitised to pregnant police officers. Secondly, women commented that maternity leave was not long enough.

Although it is the same length of time as maternity leave offered in any other organisation, the specific problem for women in the police force is that there was no part time work available, no job share facility and no career break scheme in place. These women had no other option but to resign, and unlike professions such as teaching or nursing, policing provided problems rather than opportunities for returning to their chosen career. Current recruiting criteria negates the value of previous service and does not recognise the importance to policing of life experience, maturity and the feminine persona. This prohibits the participation of a number of women within the community, this sample group being among them.

By failing to implement initiatives that would encourage greater participation and retention of women in policing, the organisation has not acknowledged the value of mature, experienced female officers with families. This deficiency in policy development is further evidence of women's marginalisation because it denies their value and contribution to policing and furthermore sends a message to the organisation and the community that the role of women in policing is inconsequential.

7.4 SUPPORT NETWORKS

The participants' perceptions of women as a support network for other women in policing and the value women bring to the job produced some contradictory and significant data. These findings are commensurate with the literature relating to tokens, their status and work behaviours (Carden, 1990; Kanter, 1977). Whilst the women were confident of their own abilities to perform police tasks well, they had difficulty in expressing this same confidence in the abilities of other individual women within the organisation.

Their responses were those that would be expected from males within policing. Those participants who had not been part of the Women's Police Unit were distrustful of other women in the job, chose not to work with other woman as partners and did not see women as being part of and providing a network of support. This is to be expected when it is realised that few, if any, of the participants have had the opportunity to establish a sound working relationship with any other woman. Due to their small numbers in any one unit, women have not had the opportunity to work directly with other women, watch other women's style of work, establish working relationships, or offer support and encouragement to new female workers. However, those women who had served with the Women's Police Unit prior to integration were more confident of the abilities of other women, were prepared to partner them in all duties and were more positive and encouraging about the value of women in policing. This is not to say that they wished a return to the days of the Women's Police Unit..

7.5 CONCLUSION

This study sought to determine whether women who have served with the Western Australia Police Force experienced marginalisation during their police careers and whether this marginalisation or other factors contributed to the discontinuance of their careers. The findings of this research are consistent with the literature relating to women in policing.

The study was based on a small sample group which was selected on an "all accepted" basis. The size and the method by which the participants were selected, raise issues of validity and reliability which would not apply to a larger sample.

Having said this however, it is fair to argue, that since evidence exists [as the literature indicates] that women in western democratic social paradigms have been marginalised, and this sample group of leavers have experienced marginalisation within policing, then there is a reasonable degree of probability that other women still serving in the Western Australia Police Force are being marginalised. The results from this sample indicate the marginalisation to which they are exposed may not be recognised at present and as such will be left unaddressed.

This study highlights that these 15 women were [overtly and covertly] marginalised within their police careers and that this marginalisation, vis-a-vis inadequate consideration and accommodation of women's dual role life pressures, contributed to their resignation and failure to return to policing.

The elements of marginalisation outlined in this paper are embodied in all aspects of the formal and informal structures of the Western Australia Police Force. The hope for change lies in a recognition, by agents within a position of power, of the current position of women and of their true value.

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APPENDICES



WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE HEADQUARTERS
2 ADELAIDE TERRACE, EAST PERTH
WESTERN AUSTRALIA 6004
TELEPHONE: 222 1111
FACSIMILE: 222 1664
TELEX: 92145

APPENDIX A

YOUR REF:

W.A. POLICE REF:

ENQUIRIES:

RE: WOMEN IN POLICING RESEARCH PROJECT

The Centre for Police Research (CPR) is conducting a large research project on Women in Policing. In order to examine some of the problems faced by women in the force, interviews with former officers are seen as an important source of information.

If you are prepared to share some of your experiences to enhance this project you are invited to contact Vicki Wilkinson on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. Vicki is an experienced researcher employed by the CPR to gather information for the project and will treat all information obtained with the strictest confidence.

I hope you feel disposed to assist in this important project.

Yours faithfully,

M J EVANS
ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER (PERSONNEL)

APPENDIX B

Dear Ms

Thank you for contacting us and consenting to participate in the research on women in policing.

I have attached, for your information, a copy of the ethical guidelines for this research as prescribed by Edith Cowan University's Committee for the Conduct of Ethical Research. I have also included a copy of the subjects that I will cover during the interview.

I will be in contact soon to arrange a time that is convenient to you for us to meet.

Yours sincerely,

**Vicki Wilkinson
Researcher.**

APPENDIX C

The following information is presented for your protection under the guidelines of the University Committee for the Conduct of Ethical Research.

This study seeks to investigate the factors affecting the decision to discontinue women's' police careers.

It is expected that this information will increase Police administrators awareness of significant factors surrounding the issue of female employment in law enforcement.

Interviews are to be conducted with a number of retired female sworn officers to determine their perception of the role of women in policing and to look at the factors affecting their attrition from the police force.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and anonymous, any information obtained will be treated with the strictest confidence. You can at any time, withdraw your participation from the study.

We estimate that the interview will take approximately an hour to complete.

Any questions regarding this project can be directed to Vicki Wilkinson on [REDACTED].

APPENDIX D

Date joined

Date left

Age joined

Marital status on joining:

On leaving:

Children on joining:

On leaving:

Rank on resigning:

Educational level on joining

GETTING IN: Motivations, testing for admission.

HOW MANY WOMEN SHOULD BE IN POLICING?

ACADEMY TRAINING: Your performance, squad member treatment, staff treatment.

EXPERIENCES: On probation and off.

TASKS: Were they different to you male colleagues?

SUCCESS YOU AND OTHERS: What did you and other women bring to policing?

TREATMENT IN THE JOB: Peer treatment, supervisor treatment, public treatment.

WHAT WERE THE POSITIVE THINGS ABOUT THE JOB?

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND IT AS A CAREER?

PROBLEMS: With the system, with the people.

WHAT WAS YOUR REASON FOR LEAVING?

IF OTHER ARRANGEMENTS COULD HAVE BEEN MADE, WOULD YOU HAVE CONSIDERED STAYING ON?

MENTOR SYSTEM: Was there one, would it have helped?

WAS THERE OTHER FEMALE OFFICERS WORKING WITH YOU:
How closely, how many, did you see it as a network of support.

WERE YOU HAPPY WITH THE LEAVING PROCESS?

TABLES

TABLE 1

**Police by rank and gender.
Western Australia Police Force.
1994**

RANK	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	% OF FORCE - MALE	% OF FORCE - FEMALE
Snr. Executive.	7	0	7	0.17	0
Commander	7	0	7	0.17	0
Chief Supt.	11	0	11	0.26	0
Superintendent	42	0	42	0.99	0
Chief Inspector	29	0	29	0.69	0
Inspector	105	0	105	2.48	0
Senior Sergeant	179	3	182	4.23	0.07
Sergeant I/C	268	4	272	6.34	0.09
Sergeant	496	11	507	11.73	0.26
Senior Constable	863	34	897	20.41	0.81
Constable I/C	993	205	1198	23.49	4.86
Constable	750	130	880	17.74	3.08
Recruits	74	17	91	1.75	0.4
TOTAL	3824	404	4228	90.40	9.60